

MIRACLES AND FAITH

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When Jesus was in his “own country” (Mark 6:1), it says that “he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. And he marveled because of their unbelief” (Mark 6:5-6). Miracles by definition are works that only God can do (John 3:2). As such, miracles are God’s testimony that the one performing the miracles is speaking His word (Exod 4:1-9; 1 Kgs 17:17-24; John 3:1-2; 5:36-37; 10:25). Their very purpose is to confirm God’s word (Mark 16:20; Acts 15:32; Heb 2:3-4), so that people will *believe* (John 20:30-31). As miracles were designed to produce faith in God and His word, the scriptures also show many cases where faith that already existed led to the performance of miracles, which in turn presented opportunities for others to believe.

Miracles leading to faith

The people of Jesus’ home country had already heard of the miracles that he had done in Capernaum and elsewhere (Luke 4:16-24). Many people from there and throughout Galilee had been in Jerusalem at the passover and had seen the miracles that Jesus did there (John 2:23; 3:1-2; 4:45). Therefore, God had not deprived the people of Nazareth of an opportunity to see His witness to Christ so that they could believe in him. They had been given a sufficient opportunity to believe, but they still did not believe, which is why Jesus marveled at their lack of faith (Mark 6:6). He upraided the cities of Galilee, and foretold the severity of their coming judgment because they saw so many of Christ’s miracles, yet refused to believe and repent (Matt 11:20-24). To disbelieve the words of one who has done miracles is to reject God’s own testimony, which is equivalent to calling God a liar (1 John 5:9-10). The people of Jesus’ native region were guilty of this. Since they had rejected God’s witness to Christ, there was no further reason for Jesus to do miracles there. “And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief” (Matt 13:58). John 12:37-40 says, “*But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: that the saying of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Isaiah said again, he hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.*” Miracles were designed to produce faith, and if there is no faith after miracles have been performed, there is no need for more miracles. That is why when the (formerly) rich man begged Abraham to send the beggar Lazarus back from the dead for the sake of his five brothers on earth, Abraham refused (Luke 16:19-31). God had already confirmed the words He spoke by Moses and the prophets by many miracles, including the resurrection of the dead (see 1 Kgs 17:17-24; 2 Kgs 4:18-37; 13:20-21). As there was no need to *reconfirm* God’s word for the rich man’s five unbelieving brothers, there was no need for God to reconfirm the words he had spoken through His Son Jesus for the people of Nazareth.

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Faith leading to miracles

It is for this same reason that the performance of certain miracles was contingent upon the faith of the recipients of those miracles. Many people had either personally seen or had heard of the miracles that Jesus had already done, and thus were responsible for believing in him. If they had not had any faith after *knowing* that God had born witness to Jesus, then they would have been unwilling to take the kind of action that derives from faith (the definition of a *living* faith, Jas 2:14-26), the kind of action that was necessary to benefit from certain miracles. But if they had faith, then their actions might result in a miracle being done. For example, the Roman centurion came to Jesus to request that he heal his sick servant (Matt 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10). Because of his faith, that miracle was done. If he had not believed, and had not ever approached Christ, then the miracle would not have been done. The same is true of many others, such as the man who was sick of the palsy and was lowered through the roof of the house where Jesus was teaching (Matt 9:1-8; Mark 2:1-12; Luke 5:17-26); the woman with the issue of blood who touched Jesus' clothes while he was walking to Jairus' house (Matt 9:20-22; Mark 5:25-34; Luke 8:43-48); the two blind men in Matthew 9:27-31 who cried out to Jesus because they believed he could heal them; the Syrophenician woman who came to Jesus to have him heal her daughter (Matt 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30); the two blind men, including Bartimaeus, who cried out to Jesus as he passed by them in Jericho (Matt 20:29-34; Mark 10:46-52; Luke 18:35-43); the man who came to Cana to beg Jesus to heal his son who was sick in Capernaum (John 4:46-54); the leper who declared that if it were Jesus' will, he could heal him (Matt 8:1-4; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 5:12-15); Jairus, who came to Jesus begging him to come to his house to heal his sick daughter (Matt 9:18-19, 23-26; Mark 5:21-24, 35-43; Luke 8:40-42, 49-56); the blind man in Bethsaida (Mk 8:22-26); the ten lepers (Luke 17:11-19). Many were healed in various places because people had enough faith to bring the sick to Jesus (Matt 4:24; 8:16-17; 14:34-36; 15:29-31; 21:14; Mark 1:32-34; 3:7-12; 6:53-56; Luke 4:40-41; 5:15; 6:17-19; 9:10-11). That is how devils were cast out of a dumb man (Matt 9:32-34; Luke 11:14-15), a blind and dumb man (Matt 12:22), a deaf and dumb man (Mark 7:31-37), and a child with a fierce devil (Matt 17:14-18; Mark 9:14-27; Luke 9:37-43). None these miracles would have occurred if people had not had the faith to come and approach Jesus. The ultimate result of these miracles which were preceded by certain peoples' faith, was to cause still others to have the opportunity to believe. We who have personally seen no miracles also have the opportunity to believe through the record of the miracles that have been done. John 20:30-31 says, "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: *but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.*" And may we never call our God a liar by rejecting His witness!